normally on monthly basis. Accordingly, the ex-storage point price of HSD has been revised during the last ten months as under:

Effective dates	Ex-storage point price (excluding excise duty etc.) (Rs./KL)
20.05.98	7536.89
09.01.99	6722.37
28.02.99	6621.76

New Oil Fields in Assam

2734. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether new oil fields have been discovered in Assam recently by the Oil India Ltd.;

(b) if so, the details of the new discovery; and

(c) the broad estimate of reserve ascertained after the discovery?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) During the year 1998-1999, Oil India Limited has made additional discoveries of hydrocarbons at Mohanbari, North Balijan, South Kathaloni, Khagarijan, Kamkhat and Moran South (Deeper Prospects) in Assam.

(c) The reserves in respect of the above discoveries are yet to be assessed.

Blocks of ONGC Awarded to Private Companies

2735. SHRIMATI CHANDRAKALA PANDEY:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Banskandi, Masimpur, Chandipur, Pathimara Bhairabi and Chargola blocks of ONGC Cachar projects were awarded to private companies;

(b) If so, the present status of exploration activities in these areas;

(c) if not, the reasons for slowing down the exploration activities in these areas; and

(d) the action taken by Government to accelerate the exploration programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) Exploration blocks AA-ONJ/2, covering Banskandi and CR-ON-90/1 covering Chargola, Chandipur, Bhairabi (partially) and Masimpur have been approved for award to private companies subject to agreement on terms and conditions of the Production Sharing Contract. Out of this, contract for CR-ON-90/1 has been signed.

(b) and (c) The preliminary studies of the existing data of block CR-ON-90/1 have begun to plan the future exploration activity in the block. However, PEL for the block has not yet been granted by the State Government.

(d) The New Exploration Licensing Policy which envisages increased competition among companies is a step towards increasing oil exploration.

In addition, ONGC and OIL have a programme for the IXth Five Year Plan which will bring about significant changes in physical inputs and approach.

Repayment to Dealers

2736. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that huge amounts of number of dealers are still credited in the books of IOC from the last 15 to 20 years;

(b) whether Government would issue direction to the Corporation to repay the said amount after obtaining the Indemnity Bond/Bank Guarantee or shall give the bond etc. against the said amount;

(c) whether the Oil Corporation would be directed to give at least bank rate of interest on this said amount; and

(d) if not, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (d) No, Sir, IOC has reported that for all customers, Party's Account at Depot (PAD) is being maintained at the supply locations and any credit balance in the PAD of a dealer is adjusted against the payments to be received for subsequent supplies. These are running accounts, and adjustment of balances outstanding at a point of time is an ongoing exercise.

As a matter of system, generally no Indemnity Bond/Bank Guarantees are sought in respect of the refunds claimed by the customers arising out of their running accounts. Joint reconciliation of the account between IOC and the customer is a conclusive proof of the amounts due to either party and does not call for any Indemnity Bond/Bank Guarantees Unless specifically agreed, in a situation of running accounts which over a period of time could reflect balances in favour of either of the parties, there is no system/arrangement of charging interest by either of the parties. Having regard to the merit of this system and that the relations between the customers and the IOC are purely based on commercial considerations which are guided by the mutually agreed terms on customer to customer basis, Government does not consider necessary to issue any directive in this regard.

Discrimination in Newly Allotted SKO dealership

2737. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minsiter of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the oil Corporations are providing the working capital alongwith the developed infrastructure under Licence in Form XIII to newly allotted SKO Dealership to ladies and SC/ST category.

(b) whether Government would issue directions to the oil Corporations to provide the same facility to the Old dealers of above categories who are being forced to obtain licence in Form XIII; and

(c) if not, the reasons for discrimination and the estimated loss to Oil Corporation for extending this facility to such dealers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (c) In order to ensure that SC/ST allottees of petroleum products do not fall prey to the money lenders or compelled to enter into benami transaction for operation of dealerships/distributorships allotted to them, Government had notified a scheme in 1992 for providing financial assistance to them. Under this Scheme, dealerships/ distributorships complete in all respects are provided including working capital loan to the persons belonging to SC/ST. The Scheme is applicable to those allottees who have been allotted dealerships/distributorships from 1.4.1992 onwards. With effect from 1.4 1997, the Scheme has been extended to widows and unmarried women above 40 years of age without earning parents.

As the old dealers have established their business over the years and would have developed adequate financial and other resources to provide the facilities under Form XIII licence, the new dealers only are extended this facility and the oil